

Remarks by Ambassador Beatrice W. Walters
Fulbright Reception held at the Chief of Missions Residence
Friday 24th August, 2012
6:30 P.M.

Salutations

A pleasant evening to everyone.

Thank you for being here this evening. This event is something that I have been planning for quite a while.

As you know, Trinidad and Tobago celebrates its 50th Anniversary of Independence next Friday.

Our Embassy has engaged in a number of activities over the past few months to celebrate this milestone and will soon unveil to the public a poster show celebrating 200 years of shared history between our countries.

Trinidad and Tobago remains one of our strongest allies in this hemisphere and we truly value the good relations that we continue to enjoy with this country.

I am indeed honored that you can be here this evening as my guests as your presence here today is a testimony of yet another successful collaboration between our countries.

The Fulbright Program remains the U.S. Government's premiere international educational exchange program to increase mutual understanding, build human potential and future leaders such as yourselves.

The Fulbright Program has changed the lives of many fellows for the better and hopefully this has also been your experience.

Our Embassy considers you to be a key resource in carrying out our own mandate of strengthening ties and promoting peaceful relations between our countries the United States and Trinidad and Tobago.

As many of you know, the program was created by Senator J William Fulbright in the aftermath of World War II.

He believed that education and mutual understanding were the keys to preventing future conflict.

Explaining the importance of this program he said:

“Our future is not in the stars but in our own minds and hearts. Creative leadership and liberal education, which in fact go together, are the first requirements for a hopeful future of humankind.”

Today, some 66 years since the Fulbright Program was established, the need for education, leadership and understanding are as great as ever.

It is therefore important to remind people about what **is** special about Fulbright, beyond professional development and making contacts.

As Trinidad and Tobago moves forward, it is important that programs such as Fulbright be kept alive and made available to others.

Like the recently concluded Olympic Games, you should consider yourselves to be the torch bearers of this program leading the path for successive generations.

One challenge facing the program is the ever-rising cost of university educations which in some cases have grown faster than the Fulbright program's grants.

As Fulbright fellows, through your Fulbright Alumni Association, I challenge you to use your creativity to leverage financial resources for the program and give others the opportunity you enjoyed.

If you are not already a member of the Fulbright Alumni Association of Trinidad and Tobago, I urge you to join. Alumni Associations play a key role in enabling alumni to give back to their communities.

During my tenure here in Trinidad, I have embarked on several projects, many projects and there others to come on stream for which your expertise would be welcomed on a range of topics such as: health care, violence against women, youth, poverty, community empowerment, Aids and HIV, economic development, incest to name a few.

In keeping with this evening's event and our celebration of 200 years of shared history with Trinidad and Tobago I would like to take this opportunity to salute you all on your achievements to date and look forward to seeing a few Nobel Laureates in the future from such a distinguished group. You laugh, but hopefully it's there.

It would also be remiss of me if I did not use this opportunity to thank most wholeheartedly those alumni who have certainly withstood the test of time by lending their support to us over the years by serving on the Alumni Association or serving on the various selection committees to select Fulbright candidates.

Anyone here who has ever served in either of these capacities, the embassy is grateful for your support.

I would like to thank at this time the Embassy staff – Alex, Jacqui, Alana, Gabby, Melissa, Janice and Mauriceo, Jim and Keith and my household chef who work closely with us every day.

I would like to end by saying on behalf of the Government of the United States of America and the Fulbright Program agency, I would like to thank you again for your support over the years.

I will end on this positive note and invite you to continue to partake of the refreshments.

And I am now ready to hear these great stories, especially those with youth. I have worked with youth for over 30 years. It has not only changed their families but changed that person.

Do enjoy the rest of the evening.